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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION

In-depth evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with paragraph 5 (e) (i) of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the attached report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments, programmes and agencies; the Secretary-General takes note of the findings in the report and concurs with the recommendations made in it.

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ANNEX

In-depth evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

SUMMARY

The present report reviews the achievements and shortcomings of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in (a) the promotion of natural disaster reduction programmes and the mobilization of emergency relief when disasters occur; and (b) the strengthening of the coordinated response of the United Nations to humanitarian emergencies. The report presents findings and recommendations on these topics.

The general thrust of the report is that, for emergencies requiring a coordinated response, the Department should focus on support of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and on coordination of emergency assistance without becoming operational itself, and that more attention be given to natural disaster reduction programmes. Other recommendations are made on, inter alia, support of the Department to field coordination by means of a Department cadre of field support staff; early agreement on allocation of responsibilities in emergencies; operational predictibility and addressing gaps in the response to emergencies; inter-agency consolidated appeals; enhanced coordination with development programmes and agencies; using disaster relief practices in major emergencies; and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended that an in-depth evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs be prepared for its consideration in 1997.

2. The in-depth evaluation reviewed all the programmes of the Department. The present report is organized around the two main domains covered by the Department's activities: natural and other sudden-onset disasters (sect. II) and complex humanitarian emergencies (sect. III). Section IV addresses overall management concerns.

3. In the conduct of the in-depth evaluation, the following categories of information were utilized by the Central Evaluation Unit of the Office of Internal Oversight Services: (a) information in the public domain (United Nations reports and documents, and studies by government agencies, non-governmental organizations and individual experts); (b) information from internal sources (the Department's internal evaluation reports, reports of consultants and internal working documents); (c) structured interviews and consultations with a wide range of government representatives in Geneva and New York, staff of the Department and of other departments of the Secretariat, staff of non-governmental organizations and of programmes and agencies of the United Nations system participating in the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee or in the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Unattributed statements in the report are based on interviews by the Central Evaluation Unit or its conclusions from written sources.

4. A management audit of the Department's field activities was conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services; the main findings of the audit, in conjunction with other studies of field activities reviewed in the conduct of the in-depth evaluation, were incorporated in the present report.

5. Programme 37 of the current medium-term plan, emergency humanitarian assistance, was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991. Many Governments had criticized the manner in which the United Nations system, as a whole, responded to major humanitarian emergencies, "the main criticism being the difficulty that the United Nations entities [had] and the time it [took] to agree among themselves on an acceptable coordination arrangement" (E/1991/109/Add.1, para. 3). To strengthen the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, resolution 46/182 provided in paragraph 34 of its annex for the designation of a high-level official, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, who "should combine the functions at present carried out in the coordination of United Nations response by representatives of the Secretary-General for major and complex emergencies, as well as by the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator". In addition to the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the main instruments established to strengthen coordination were the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the Consolidated Appeal Process. Resolution 46/182 was reinforced by the General Assembly in resolutions adopted at subsequent sessions. The overall objective of the programme emergency humanitarian

assistance, derived from these General Assembly resolutions, is "to ensure better preparation for, as well as a rapid and coherent response to, emergencies, natural and man-made, thus reducing the suffering and loss of human lives and material destruction; promoting prevention and preparedness; and ensuring smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development".[b] The programme is under the responsibility of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs; the Emergency Relief Coordinator is the head of the Department, with the rank of Under-Secretary-General. Between June 1992 and June 1996, the Department launched 64 consolidated inter-agency appeals, covering 240.7 million target beneficiaries.

6. The functions assigned to the Department are divided between five subprogrammes. During the biennium 1996-1997, within the programme of work, the resources allocated to these subprogrammes were (in thousands of United States dollars):

	Regular budget, revised appropriations		Extra-budgetary funds, revised estimates	
Subprogrammes	Amount	Percentage[a]	Amount	Percentage
1. Policy planning and development	1 446	11.9	36 234[b]	13.7
2. Disaster prevention and preparedness	2 855	23.5	11 667	4.4
3. Emergency information management	2 138	17.6	2 082	0.8
4. Disaster relief	2 491	20.5	33 240	12.5
5. Complex humanitarian emergencies	3 219	26.5	182 046[c]	68.6
	12 149	100.0	265 269	100.0

[a] Amounts of regular budget resources by subprogrammes are based on percentages presented in the proposed programme budget for the period 1996-1997 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/50/6/Rev.1), vol. II, sect. 24).

[b] Includes the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Clearance ($30,780,000).

[c] Includes the Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund ($40,016,000) and the escrow account "Oil for Food" ($79,025,000).

At headquarters, subprogrammes 2, 3 and 4 are essentially implemented in Geneva; subprogrammes 1 and 5 in New York, with support in part provided in Geneva.

II. NATURAL AND OTHER SUDDEN-ONSET DISASTERS

A. Emergency relief in the wake of natural and other sudden-onset disasters

7. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs assists in mobilizing and coordinating international emergency relief to countries affected by natural or other sudden-onset disasters. In 1995, the Department provided support to 55 Member States in the wake of 82 disasters; appeals for international assistance were launched in 28 cases. These activities are, in large part, the continuation of a well established programme inherited from the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO); they are under the responsibility of the Relief Coordination Branch. Activities are carried out in close collaboration with the Resident Coordinator system and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field offices; and, through the Resident Coordinator, with the relevant agencies participating in the country disaster management team. The Relief Coordination Branch comprises a number of regional desks and of units providing support services. Emergency information disseminated by the Relief Coordination Branch is useful to Governments and interested organizations. In support of the work of the Relief Coordination Branch, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has provided the Department with 70 focal points worldwide which can be contacted directly by the Department; although the practice of direct contact is not yet well established, results have been encouraging, and WMO intends to increase the number of focal points.

8. A variety of tools and mechanisms coordinated by the Relief Coordination Branch are now available to respond to different emergency needs, inter alia:

(a) The Department can dispatch field delegates or establish on-site coordination centres; and United Nations inter-agency missions can be organized;

(b) The Department can coordinate, under the responsibility of the Government of the affected country, the mobilization of military, civil protection and civil defence assets, at the request of and for operational agencies;

(c) Since 1993, in consultation with the local UNDP office, the Department can field United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams to assist local authorities carry out assessment and coordination at a disaster site or in the capital. There is no charge for this service. The teams are made available by participating countries; more expertise existing in developing countries could be mobilized, sometimes at proximity of disaster sites, but funding would be needed in most cases to bring teams into operations;

(d) Through the local UNDP office, when the situation warrants, the Department provides emergency cash grants of up to $50,000 to disaster-stricken countries to cover the most pressing needs of the affected population. In principle, priorities are agreed upon by the country disaster management team, and allocations may be made to the Resident Representative or agencies providing assistance;

(e) Donors cash contributions can be channelled through the Department to cover priority relief needs; in 1995, $7 million were channelled through the Department;

(f) The Department maintains a permanent stock of donated disaster relief items at its warehouse, in Pisa. In 1995, the implementation of memoranda of understanding on the cooperative use of the warehouse with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) increased the warehouse capacity to respond to emergencies; however, it is still not used to its full potential.

The strict application of United Nations administrative rules and procedures complicates the management of all these options.

9. In several of its resolutions, 37/144 of 17 December 1982, 39/207 of 17 December 1984 and 45/221 of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to adapt existing United Nations procedures to permit UNDRO "to respond in a timely manner to the special and immediate requirements of countries exposed to sudden disasters" (resolution 45/221, para. 3). When it created the Department, the Assembly expressed concern at the unsuitability of the United Nations administrative and financial rules and procedures to circumstances where swift action was required; resolution 46/182 provides in paragraph 29 of its annex that "special emergency rules and procedures should be developed by the United Nations to enable all organizations to disburse quickly emergency funds, and to procure emergency supplies and equipment, as well as to recruit emergency staff". It should be recalled that coordination, although "non-operational", may entail providing field coordinators with personnel and administrative and logistic support when such support cannot be made available by other organizations. Furthermore, the role of the Department in responding to natural disasters usually involves the reception and channelling of large contributions, including procurement and transportation of relief goods.

10. Some progress has been made through a joint effort of the Department, of Geneva administrative services and of the Department of Administration and Management in New York. For example, arrangements made regarding the contracting and transportation of United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams (see para. 8 above) enable teams deployment in less than a day. When appropriate, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is also trying to develop agreements by which equipment and logistics are delivered and operated without its administrative involvement. However, problems that hinder the effectiveness of the Department remain in different areas, involving recruitment, procurement or transfer of funds. The Joint Inspection Unit has observed that "since 1992, because the internal auditors insisted that the Department adhere to the United Nations Financial Rules and Regulations, a waiting period of a minimum six months may elapse before the clearances are made" (JIU/REP/95/9, para. 234). As a consequence of the absence of appropriate rules, existing rules are frequently applied in a manner that does not take into account the nature of the Department's activities. The Department's in-country support to coordination was discontinued when temporary contracts were not renewed on time; allotment advices to fund disaster emergency relief are most of the time received more than 10 days after Department requests are filed; it

takes three weeks or more until UNDP field offices receive authorization to incur expenditures against Department funds provided for disaster emergency relief. The United Nations Controller had, in the past, granted UNDRO delegation of authority in relation to specific emergencies; a standing delegation of authority to cover relevant areas, however, has never been granted. In the absence of a comprehensive set of emergency rules and procedures adapted to the Department's activities, such delegation would at least cut back the long procedural delays inherent in the present system.

Recommendation 1, Special United Nations emergency rules and procedures

(a) In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 46/182, special emergency rules and procedures should be developed by the end of 1997. These special emergency rules and procedures would incorporate the adaptations already made with regard to financial procedures as they relate to the requirements of Department of Humanitarian Affairs emergency activities, address related issues concerning personnel and procurement arrangements, and make any other adjustments needed;

(b) Pending development of such rules, existing financial procedures would remain in place but a standing delegation of authority to cover other processes for which existing rules are most detrimental to the Department's effectiveness should be granted to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and his designated representatives; the authority delegated should be used in a manner that is consistent with United Nations policies in areas such as recruitment of personnel and geographical and gender balance, or procurement of goods for disaster relief and international bidding.

B. Disaster reduction

1. Background

11. Some disasters may be prevented, and the impact and adverse effects of others can be mitigated. Disaster prevention, preparedness, and mitigation have formed part of the mandate of UNDRO since its inception in 1971. Towards the end of the 1980s a series of major natural disasters created a greater recognition of the need for pre-disaster, preventive action. UNDRO collaboration with UNDP was enhanced; country disaster management teams with a role to play in mitigation activities as well as emergency operations replaced the former emergency operations groups. The development of joint UNDRO/UNDP training in disaster management also began.

12. In resolution 42/169 of 11 December 1987, the General Assembly, "convinced that concerted international action for the reduction of natural disasters over the course of the 1990s would give genuine impetus to a series of concrete measures" decided to designate the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. In its resolution 44/236 of 22 December 1989, the General Assembly adopted the International Framework of Action for the Decade proposed by the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Decade. The Framework contained a set of practical targets to be achieved by the year 2000:

comprehensive national assessments of risks from natural hazards, with these assessments taken into account in planning for sustainable development; mitigation plans at national and/or local levels, involving long-term prevention, preparedness and community awareness; and ready access to global, regional, national and local warning systems and broad dissemination of warnings.

13. The programme of work for natural disaster reduction is carried out by the Department's Disaster Reduction Division. The Division incorporates the Disaster Mitigation Branch and the Decade secretariat which is servicing the International Framework of Action for the Decade. The disaster management training programme also has an important role to play in providing a training and educational tool for the integration of natural disaster reduction into the national development process.

2. Support to programmes at the global level

14. The Disaster Mitigation Branch provides technical advice and backstopping of projects in the field of risk and vulnerability assessments as well as on the development of national disaster management plans and strategies. The Disaster Mitigation Branch has provided assistance in reaction to a variety of circumstances: in some countries it was in the wake of natural disasters, in collaboration, within the Department, with the Relief Coordination Branch; in others, requests were received following a disaster management training programme workshop; sometimes it was at the request of donors in search of an implementing agency. The variety of projects implemented and the nature of the Disaster Mitigation Branch involvement has not followed an overall strategy. Only recently has the Branch attempted, in one region, to define overall priorities before taking the decision to provide assistance. The Branch acts as implementing partner to United Nations executing agencies, or as cooperating agency in case of government execution of disaster reduction projects, but it does not have the resources to cover more than a very marginal portion of the countries' requirements for technical cooperation in disaster reduction. In the meantime, increased attention has been given to disaster prevention in programmes within or even outside the United Nations system. For example, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCS) is focusing further on capacity-building to diminish people's vulnerability; UNDP is expanding its support to country efforts to identify the level of vulnerability to disasters and formulate programmes. There is, however, no comprehensive monitoring of activities within and outside the United Nations system on disaster reduction.

> Recommendation 2, Overall strategy for Department of Humanitarian Affairs support to disaster reduction: To support the practical application of disaster reduction policies, the Disaster Mitigation Branch should, primarily: (a) provide international and regional programmes and agencies involved in the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the Decade with the required guidance in the development of disaster management plans and strategies; and (b) monitor actions of these programmes and agencies in relation to the targets of the Framework.

3. Training for national plans and policies

15. Many training programmes are organized by a multiplicity of organizations to promote national disaster management, focused mainly on emergency operations and disaster preparedness. Within the Department, the disaster management training programme, jointly managed with UNDP, is one of the few programmes to provide a global framework in disaster management. In several countries where workshops were organized, disaster management plans have incorporated mitigation and prevention activities, and a few have created links to national development plans. Sixty-three country or regional workshops were organized between 1991 and 1996; but there was no clear prescription of who would be in charge of post-workshop activities. UNDP country offices were often unprepared to take on the extra responsibility of follow-up. From the perspective of the United Nations, disaster management training programmes are expected to have a sustained impact on the performance of the country disaster management teams, which include agency representatives and are chaired by the Resident Coordinator. Viewed from this perspective, disaster management training programme workshops are only the first step in a process of capacity-building; the programme must build on and strengthen local United Nations initiatives. The first phase of the programme was ended in 1994. The launching of the second phase was to be accompanied by stronger coordination between the Department and UNDP, and with other United Nations agencies participating in the disaster management team mechanism. In 1996, staff of the Department's units concerned with natural disasters recommended improving coordination within and outside of the Department by joint planning of the Disaster Mitigation Branch, disaster management training programmes and Decade secretariat programmes, collaboration between the Disaster Mitigation Branch and the Relief Coordination Branch for assessment work in the wake of a disaster was initiated. The second phase of the disaster management training programme was launched early 1997.

> Recommendation 3, Department of Humanitarian Affairs support to in-country coordination of disaster reduction programmes: Within the Department, activities of the disaster management training programme and of the Disaster Reduction Division should be jointly planned. Concerning its partners, the Department should request the executive heads of the agencies involved in disaster reduction programmes to issue by the end of 1997 clear directives to their field offices instructing them to participate actively in the Resident Coordinator system and the disaster management team mechanism.

4. Follow-up to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

16. Progress towards attainment of the targets contained in the International Framework of Action for the Decade has not been uniform. During its initial phase, the Decade suffered a number of setbacks, explained in part by insufficient complementarity and limited distinctiveness in relation to disaster response and emergency response, and weak linkages with social and economic development. In 1994, the mid-term review of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a

Safer World (A/CONF.172/9, chap. I, resolution I) provided a clearer definition of such complementarity and linkages.

17. Within the United Nations system, most specialized agencies concerned with disaster reduction, mainly WMO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and WHO, participate actively in the Framework. At WMO, the aims of the Decade are coincident with those of the agency and a major portion of WMO regular programme supports disaster reduction and the improvement of early warning capacities. An increasing diversity and variety of initiatives, which incorporate disaster reduction practices into mainstream activities, are taken outside of the United Nations, in governmental and in private sectors. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has stressed in this connection that "the impact of individual initiatives should not become limited through isolated knowledge. The United Nations must encourage information exchange" (A/51/186-E/1996/80, para. 23). Within the International Framework of Action, the establishment of national committees was encouraged; some of the national committees work well, but many more require urgent advice and support.

18. Organized networking among all parties involved in the International Framework of Action is dependent upon the development of a clearing house function for the collation and dissemination of best practices in disaster reduction. The development of "a concrete proposal for an effective international mechanism on early warning, to include the transfer of technologies related to early warning to developing countries" requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of its resolution 50/117 B of 20 December 1995, is just one specialized form of the comprehensive information management responsibility assigned to the Decade secretariat. In 1996, the Decade secretariat initiated a survey of primary user groups, to identify their information requirements and contributions, and to involve them directly in the information exchange process. However, the capacity within the Decade secretariat to sustain the initiative is limited.

19. There is now an increased emphasis on the link between disaster reduction and sustainable development, and on the need to initiate long-term mitigation programmes. Unfortunately, there is no reliable comprehensive data on the economic aspects of natural disasters; as a result policy makers cannot base their decisions on documented facts, and cost-benefit analyses of specific natural disaster prevention or reduction measures are often questionable. The Decade secretariat initiated case studies in three countries; a study of a wider scope is needed.

20. As noted in paragraph 15 above, the focus of training and advocacy was more on response preparedness than on disaster prevention. The civil defence community - or more broadly those who respond to disasters - has been the main target of disaster management programmes. As a result, disaster reduction programmes are generally not integrated into national planning, and receive insufficient attention from bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies. At the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the funding of disaster reduction programmes has remained linked to the disaster relief budgets of donor Member States; as a consequence only limited financial resources, if any at all, could be mobilized. The Decade will close at the end of 1999. Its secretariat

has initiated the process for the development of options for sustained disaster reduction activities after the closing of the Decade.

Recommendation 4, Department of Humanitarian Affairs support to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: The Department should work more closely with UNDP in seeking to raise the funds needed to support the activities of the Decade secretariat between 1997 and the closing of the Decade, in particular: (a) to establish an information network between partners of the International Framework of Action for the Decade, including early warning aspects of disaster reduction; and (b) to promote research on the economic aspects of disasters.

Recommendation 5, Follow-up to the Decade: After the closing of the Decade, in 1999, continuation of the Department's responsibilities for future disaster reduction programmes agreed upon by the General Assembly should be dependent upon a review of the comparative advantages of increased support from UNDP and upon identification of adequate funding mechanisms.

III. HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES REQUIRING A COORDINATED RESPONSE

A. Coordination mechanisms

1. Department of Humanitarian Affairs support to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

21. The institutional strengthening of coordination at Headquarters has for its ultimate objective improving the delivery of assistance in the field. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, established in 1992 and chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, concerns itself with the response of the United Nations to complex humanitarian emergencies, generally understood to be those that exceed the mandate or capacity of any one agency and require a coordinated response. Inter-Agency Standing Committee members are the relevant United Nations operational agencies (UNDP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO); participation is, in general, at the level of executive heads. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), IFRCS and a consortium of three non-governmental organizations are invitees. The Committee's Working Group prepares discussions and monitors implementation of Inter-Agency Standing Committee decisions; sub-working groups and tasks forces are established when necessary. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 48/57, of 14 December 1993, the General Assembly stressed "that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, should serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination, meet more frequently and act therefore in an action-oriented manner". In 1994, the Committee adopted a set of action-oriented procedures to facilitate discussion and action at the executive level, and the supportive and managerial functions of the Working Group of the Committee. However, in 1996, the Emergency Relief Coordinator reiterated that the

Committee's potential as a consultative body, policy maker and humanitarian advocate was yet to be realized.

22. Several factors contributed to disappointment with the Committee. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs secretariat support to the Committee, and management of the work of the Committee and its Working Group, has not been very effective. In the 1996 management study of the Department (see para. 62 below) it was noted that this was "considered as being primarily an organizational weakness"; there are "too many uncoordinated meetings to discuss problems rather than solutions" and "too little advanced release of information prior to the meetings". Many of those interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit stated that background papers and proposals for policy decisions were usually distributed too late, and as a result agency representatives often did not come to the meetings prepared to act on proposals; many meetings had been convened with no concrete objectives set; and work initiated by the Working Group on specific issues had been pursued in an on-and-off fashion, only reaching conclusion three to four years after initiation. The number of meetings of the Committee's subsidiary groups could have been limited through more informal consultations between Committee members. On a related matter concerning the Department's consultation procedures, in comments on an earlier draft, the Department of Administration and Management stated that since the inception of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Administration and Management had had difficulties with Department of Humanitarian Affairs presenting security issues for consideration by the Committee without the involvement of the substantive office charged with managing these issues throughout the United Nations system - the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator.

23. Since their inception in 1992, the Committee's subsidiary groups have met frequently; the Committee itself, however, meets only about three times a year. This may be sufficient to address generic policy issues but it is insufficient to decide on system-wide strategies when emergencies occur. It appears that the provision that when a formal meeting of the Committee cannot be convened, the Emergency Relief Coordinator should consult with Committee members through teleconferencing facilities or other means was not applied systematically. In its comments to an earlier draft of the present report, one agency stated that its teleconferencing facilities had not been used at all, and that e-mail, fax or telephone facilities had not been used prior to some important decisions by the Committee. Many representatives of agencies interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit asserted that initiatives have been taken by the Department after little consultation between Committee members. Examples were given by Committee members ranging from minor decisions on activities of common concern to participation of the Department in major programmes. In its comments on an earlier draft of the present report, one agency stated that until the respective responsibilities and accountabilities of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Department and the Committee were better clarified, it believed that a properly functioning system of coordination could not exist; other members shared that view. On the other hand, for every meeting of the Committee and its Working Group, the Department seeks inputs from members but generally received very few; suggestions made by members other than the Department for the annual workplan of the Committee have been minimal. Very few issues brought to the attention of the Committee and its Working Group were assigned to members other than the Department.

24. The terms of reference and action procedures of the Committee and its Working Group are being revised, in an attempt to solve the shortcomings experienced. The following proposals are being considered by the Committee: technical support to the Committee, servicing of meetings and monitoring implementation of decisions would be the responsibility of an impartial administrative secretariat; substantive support would remain the responsibility of all Department units concerned with complex emergencies; ownership, i.e., that all members have an equal ownership of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies would be one of the key principles of the Committee; and the administrative secretariat would prepare an annual workplan based on decisions taken at the annual meeting of the Working Group.

Recommendation 6, Department of Humanitarian Affairs support to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee: Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/57, the Committee, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, should serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination. The Department should strengthen its capacity and improve its performance to ensure that consensus in the Committee is reached quickly on coordination arrangements, division of operational responsibilities and related matters, and thereupon effectively implemented. The Department should prioritize its work in order to facilitate inter-agency cooperation in cases of complex emergencies.

2. Coordination in the field

(a) Resident and humanitarian coordinators

25. In paragraph 39 of the annex to its resolution 46/182 establishing the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in 1992, the General Assembly recommended that "the resident coordinator should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at the country level". In 1994, the Committee concluded that, in the case of complex emergencies, recent experience demonstrated that, first and foremost, the United Nations must have the most qualified person to provide leadership for coordination of humanitarian assistance on a full-time basis. Consequently the Committee decided that, upon the occurrence of a complex emergency, the Emergency Relief Coordinator would consult with the members of the Committee to designate a humanitarian coordinator; should the resident coordinator in place have the right profile to serve as humanitarian coordinator, the Emergency Relief Coordinator would confirm his or her designation. However, as of July 1996, in the 14 situations where members of the Committee endorsed the designation of a humanitarian coordinator, the resident coordinator was designated humanitarian coordinator in only six instances.

26. In 1996, UNDP decided on a number of measures to increase training opportunities, in collaboration with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, to assist resident coordinators in crisis countries develop the required profile. However, it is doubtful that such training will transform persons who do not have significant experience in field level emergency assistance in complex emergencies with the skills required of humanitarian coordinators. UNDP has also agreed to develop further its consultation process with the Department for

resident representative nominations for complex emergency countries requiring humanitarian coordination. However, most members of the Committee believe that coordination, in complex emergencies, is a full-time role if it is to be performed well. Ten of the 12 Committee members were consulted by the Central Evaluation Unit on this issue at the end of 1996; 9 were supportive of a separate humanitarian coordinator function, even if in some cases the function was assigned to the Resident Coordinator; and 6 felt that the function, in all complex emergencies, should be carried out by someone other than the Resident Coordinator.

(b) Streamlining of coordination in the field

27. In complex emergencies there are frequently several levels of coordination. For example, at the meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on 23 September 1994, it was stated that in Rwanda, it was difficult to understand the roles of and the relationships between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the UNHCR Special Envoy and the UNDP Resident Representative. This made it difficult for the Government and for those being coordinated to distinguish their roles and relationships. The Joint Inspection Unit has observed that "a redefinition of roles, and if necessary, a fewer number of coordinators and sub-coordinators in the field may be warranted" (JIU/REP/95/9, para. 160). It should be noted that, in April 1996, out of the seven humanitarian coordinators who were not resident coordinators, five were representatives of one of the main agencies engaged in operations. Such arrangements are different from the concept of a lead agency, which is understood as an agency formally assigned by the Emergency Relief Coordinator to coordinate humanitarian assistance in a country or a region, encompassing all functions normally recognized for a humanitarian coordinator. A lead agency can be named in situations where the overwhelming proportion of United Nations assistance falls under its mandate. But this has not been the preferred solution; since the priorities of the lead agency are sectoral and can conflict with those of a coordinator. In the inter-agency follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995, agencies agreed that a lead agency might be designated to carry out the functions of operational coordination for a specific target group, geographical area or technical sector; and that the lead agency would be accountable to the resident/humanitarian coordinator. One of the criteria to follow would be that the agency has a presence on the ground and/or is able to mobilize rapidly. Systematic application of the concept may have a streamlining effect.

(c) Department of Humanitarian Affairs support of disaster management teams

28. The resident coordinator system is responsible for adequate monitoring of and preparedness for possible humanitarian crises. Disaster management teams, chaired by the resident coordinator, are responsible for preparing a contingency action plan to ensure a coordinated response to potential emergency, including a strategy for mobilization of resources. The Committee decided that, when so requested by the disaster management team, the Emergency Relief Coordinator should assist by strengthening the in-country coordination structure and by helping in the preparation of strategic planning, to prepare for assessment missions. Whenever needed, the Emergency Relief Coordinator should seek the necessary resources, including the seconding of appropriate personnel from other

United Nations agencies and operational organizations. Given competing requirements, secondments have not been sufficient and serious delays have occurred in strengthening field coordination. Support to the disaster management teams' work is particularly important in pre-crisis settings, when preventative actions and preparedness measures can help avoid a crisis or reduce its effects. In the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, this is one of the tasks entrusted to the small Rapid Response Unit. Other units in New York and at Geneva contribute under various initiatives, such as drafting of manuals and training, but the effort is fragmented.

(d) Department of Humanitarian Affairs field presence for coordination

29. In most complex emergencies beyond the very small ones, a Department of Humanitarian Affairs in-country staff complement is needed to support the work of the resident or humanitarian coordinator. Coordination structures in the field vary according to each emergency situation, and the Department has attempted to identify and establish, for planning and orientation training purposes, three notional structures of field coordination units that can be adapted to specific emergencies. Where such units have been effective, the critical factor in their contribution has been their ability to support the humanitarian coordinator and the disaster management team to persuade people to work towards a common goal such as setting up camps for internally displaced persons, conducting joint needs assessments, mobilizing resources to implement a project, developing databases and issuing situation reports. However, when personnel of the Department assume direct responsibility for operations, their credibility as an impartial party and their coordination capacity are impeded. That occurred, for example, in Angola where the personnel of the Department, rather than coordinate the United Nations system, assumed a hands-on role in establishing the quartering areas for demobilized soldiers, which included letting of contracts and intervening in many operational decisions such as allocation of drinking water, and ordering and distributing medicine and fuel. The limited number of Department personnel was spread too thin, did not possess the requisite expertise to deliver the required services and could not focus its energies on its core functions. In a number of emergencies, the slippage of the Department into an operational role, while it might have been temporarily necessary to fill gaps in humanitarian response, has created friction with the remainder of the United Nations system and undermined the Department's ability to coordinate impartially. In 1993, in its agreed conclusion 1993/1 on coordination of humanitarian assistance the Economic and Social Council noted that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was not an implementing agency with operational responsibility and capacity in the field.[5] In 1996, concern was expressed by Member States about situations where there were more staff of the Department than other agency staff, and, as a consequence, the lack of clarity about the role of the Department, and whether or not it went beyond coordination.

30. Improvements are needed in ensuring timely and effective support to the field. The Department does not have a small cadre of qualified personnel, possessing the requisite skills, that can be deployed rapidly to support the work of disaster management teams or of field coordination units staffed in part with United Nations personnel available locally. There is no predictable funding to cover this major function of the Department; there is no mechanism,

such as a reserve fund, that could be utilized in emergency situations to cover the expenses of providing support to field coordination when such support cannot be made available by operational agencies of the United Nations, or of temporarily replacing Department personnel deployed to the field. To provide the staff complement needed in the field, the Department is dependent on secondment and short-term loan of personnel from other agencies, or on funds pledged but not yet contributed. Under these arrangements, such personnel often arrive with lengthy delays and are not familiar with the Department's procedures. The Department is authorized to use the interest on the Central Emergency Revolving Fund in advance of inter-agency consolidated appeals to support field coordination; money borrowed must be repaid from contributions made in response to the appeals (see para. 40 below). The Department was able to borrow $2.27 million from the Fund in 1995 and $50,000 in 1996. In 1996, through the inter-agency consolidated appeals, the Department appealed for $14 million to support field coordination. It should be noted that such appeals are launched only for situations that evolve into complex emergencies; therefore, the expenses of providing support for coordination at the early stages of a crisis are not covered by this instrument in all situations. Furthermore, the Department appealed in 1996 for a total of over $58 million for all its field activities, including coordination, placing it in competition with agencies for raising funds.

Recommendation 7, Streamlining of field coordination: In specific emergencies, the Emergency Relief Coordinator should recommend to the Committee coordination arrangements most likely to be rapidly operational; in cases where coordination by the resident coordinator is not considered the most effective arrangement, the designation of a lead agency, when appropriate and taking into account the general policy of the Committee on this matter, should be the second option reviewed; recommendations for other arrangements should give due consideration to keeping the additional costs of coordination to a minimum and to avoiding the multiplication of layers of responsibilities and reporting. Under all coordination arrangements, the field coordinator should be held accountable by the Emergency Relief Coordinator for the impartiality with which coordination functions are carried out.

Recommendation 8, A Department of Humanitarian Affairs cadre of field support staff: Within its present financial strategy, the Department should build up a small cadre of staff at Headquarters who, in addition to their regular duties, could be rapidly dispatched to the field to support field coordination by: monitoring of preparedness measures; monitoring of and guidance with regard to contingency planning; monitoring support of operations to ensure that adequate attention is paid to all sectors and needs and that there are no gaps in coverage; and carrying out other tasks, as necessary, linked to mandated functions such as appeal preparation, information gathering and dissemination, and facilitation of access.

B. Division of labour

1. Rapid allocation of responsibilities in crises

31. At the very outset of complex emergencies, the Emergency Relief Coordinator initiates consultations in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee aimed at reaching agreement on the appropriate division of labour to deal with the crisis. Agencies stress that one of the most important tasks of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in fulfilment of his strategic coordination role is to ensure agreement early in a crisis on allocation of responsibilities in accordance with the mandates and capacities of the concerned agencies.

32. Activities in all relevant sectors by all actors are of concern to the Emergency Relief Coordinator; regarding organizations outside the United Nations system, the Emergency Relief Coordinator serves as a focal point for collaboration. In emergency situations since 1992, there have been activities which might not have received sufficient attention without the initiatives of the Emergency Relief Coordinator; also, staff of a few organizations have stated that they had been able to increase their contributions to humanitarian assistance, owing to the influence of the Emergency Relief Coordinator on inter-agency strategies. However, in situations where consensus between agencies on division of labour was difficult to reach, the Emergency Relief Coordinator was not able to play a significant role to ensure early agreement. This has been true for the clear designation of lead agency roles by geographical zone or programme sector, as well as for consensus on the appropriateness of specific agency activities. The difficulties encountered by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in exercising his authority to mediate and take a final decision have also been noticeable in the adoption of field coordination arrangements.

33. In support of the leadership role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the capacity of the Department to analyse situations and to formulate recommendations is not always used to its full potential. The Department is constrained by internal management difficulties; information or analyses available do not always lead to rapid decisions or recommendations. Several United Nations agencies have developed effective preparedness mechanisms and, in times of crisis, they have frequently bypassed the Inter-Agency Standing Committee consultative process. Humanitarian organizations commented that, in general, the capacity of the Department to support coordination needed to be enhanced. In its annual report on the question, UNICEF considered that a strategic coordination role of an efficient Department of Humanitarian Affairs, unhampered by operational responsibilities, was generally desirable (see E/ICEF/1997/5, para. 11).

> Recommendation 9, Early agreement on allocation of responsibilities: The Inter-Agency Standing Committee should delegate to the Emergency Relief Coordinator the authority to make final decisions on the allocation of responsibilities between agencies in emergency humanitarian assistance programmes requiring a coordinated response if no early agreement is reached through the normal process of consultations. The overriding consideration in such circumstances should be that the pace of preparations for and delivery of emergency assistance should not be delayed by the issue

of allocating responsibilities for programmes, and for their coordination. Terms of reference for the scope of the Emergency Relief Coordinator's decision-making authority in situations where the Committee cannot reach consensus should be adopted by the Committee before the end of 1997.

2. Permanent arrangements for operational predictability

34. When the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was established, it was observed that if coordination arrangements did not have the required automaticity built into them, there was a tendency for non-governmental organizations and some United Nations entities, which had the resources and the necessary flexibility, to move in before effective division of responsibilities was established by an ad hoc arrangement (E/1991/109/Add.1, para. 130). To reduce the effects caused by agencies' autonomy, one approach has been the development of cooperative arrangements, the purpose of which was to bring predictable inputs into operations. However, those arrangements have their limitations. Memoranda of understanding require lengthy consultations, and the most highly praised global arrangements, such as the UNHCR/WFP memoranda of understanding, are difficult to duplicate with other agencies or to extend beyond the bilateral level. It should also be noted that a significant amount of humanitarian assistance - in some cases the larger part of it - is delivered by organizations outside the United Nations system, the constitutions of some of which require total independence.

35. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has affirmed, in this connection, that system-wide efficiency and effectiveness necessitates that roles and responsibilities should be clarified globally (including especially for internally displaced persons), specified locally, and assigned from the outset of a crisis. However, a number of agencies have not been brought to a level of collaboration where capacity on the ground counts that much. Intra-sectoral coordination attempted in the field has often not resolved all overlaps and gaps. Part of the problem is that criteria for assessing agencies' delivery capacities and comparative advantage have not been established. The Emergency Relief Coordinator could have played a more active role in advocating the development of globally agreed frameworks between operational agencies and in facilitating the conclusion of negotiations, or in developing tools that could go beyond ad hoc allocation of responsibilities.

Recommendation 10, Operational predictability in the response to emergencies: By the end of 1997, the Emergency Relief Coordinator should propose to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and standards to facilitate the conclusion of bilateral agreements between agencies on roles and responsibilities for permanent arrangements to enhance operational predictability taking into account resources available throughout the United Nations system in the response to emergencies. The guidelines and standards should take into account mandates and expertise existing both within and outside the United Nations system.

3. Resolving gaps without making the Department of Humanitarian Affairs operational

36. There are a number of humanitarian issues that are not clearly entrusted to any operational agency of the United Nations system. The consequence of this situation is either duplication of ad hoc initiatives or no initiatives at all. There are gaps in mandates, and, also, gaps in operations caused by lack of capacities, resources or effective advocacy. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is responsible for determining the division of labour for those aspects of complex emergencies where ambiguity or gaps in mandates or lack of operational capacities exist.

37. For a number of issues, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was entrusted with the role of focal point for the United Nations system, either to launch studies or to coordinate existing or future programmes. For example, an Inter-Agency Task Force on Internally Displaced Persons was created to support the Emergency Relief Coordinator in his role as focal point on the question; with the participation of the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, the Task Force analysed the operational aspects of assistance to internally displaced persons. The Task Force drew up a list of the critical tasks that must be accomplished to permit and sustain effective humanitarian assistance. In 1994, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee approved the recommendation of its Task Force that the Emergency Relief Coordinator serve as the reference point in the United Nations system to receive requests for assistance and protection on actual or developing situations of IDPs (E/CN.4/1995/50, para. 176). However, the United Nations system has not yet come up with a comprehensive plan for improving its capacity to respond to such situations, and a vacuum of responsibilities often existed in cases of internally displaced persons. It should be noted that, regarding internally displaced persons, the mandates of several organizations outside of the United Nations system, such as ICRC, IFRCS and IOM, cover important aspects of their protection and assistance. Not all these organizations participate in joint programming with United Nations agencies; however, consultations with them are sufficiently developed to address operational issues of complementarity. In the context of the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee are reviewing the issue.

38. Regarding demining, addressed as a humanitarian and development issue, the Department has been designated (in the preamble to General Assembly resolution 49/215) as the focal point within the United Nations for coordinating demining and related issues. The Department has exercised its role by providing funding, coordination and programme oversight; and according to a 1994 report of the Secretary-General, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations have formulated, coordinated and implemented demining plans in a number of countries (see A/49/177-E/1994/60, para. 45). For such tasks, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been drawn into operational responsibilities (see para. 29 above) by default, where no other solution presented itself and the Department had to fill the gaps. The Department commented that where gaps existed, the responsible coordinator was obliged to fill them, preferably by inviting sector experts to do so. In a number of situations, the Department did not have the logistical support, the expertise or the qualified staff to perform operational functions, and the implementation of

programmes suffered. It is the policy of the Department not to become involved in programme implementation; however, it did not put enough effort into obtaining greater participation of operational partners, although the potential for such participation exists. For example, peacekeeping missions can receive mandates and means for demining with a rehabilitation purpose; but adequate funds for operational demining are often not included in the budgets of peacekeeping operations. Demining activities are also part of UNDP special programme initiatives, which can consist of mine field surveys, as well as institutional support to national mine clearance, including programme management and operational support, even though the funds at UNDP disposal for such work are limited. It should also be noted that the Department is responsible for the management of a voluntary trust fund to finance information and training programmes relating to mine clearance and to facilitate the launching of mine clearance operations. The balance of the Fund at the end of 1996 was $10.9 million.

39. Humanitarian organizations recognize the importance of the Department's role with respect to these unresolved issues. The efforts of the Department to further the visibility of the landmine issue within the international community, in cooperation with ICRC and non-governmental organizations, and its participation in the campaign to promote further the ban on landmines has had a significant influence. The consolidation of information in the form of specialized databases on landmines or on internally displaced persons, under development or in planning, is seen as a potentially useful contribution of the Department to the humanitarian community. The United Nations Central Landmine Database does not yet contain the detailed information, updated regularly, required by humanitarian organizations involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. On internally displaced persons, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons agreed in 1996 to cooperate in the establishment of an information system on internally displaced persons to be managed and maintained by the Department. In 1995, the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons stated that an information centre along the lines of the Centre for Documentation on Refugees established by UNHCR was needed to collect data on internally displaced persons on a worldwide basis (E/CN.4/1995/50, para. 97).

Recommendation 11, Department of Humanitarian Affairs role in addressing gaps in the response to emergencies:

(a) Where gaps are identified in the response of the United Nations system to humanitarian emergencies, the Department should work with the most appropriate operational agencies to build up their in-house capacities to fill these gaps, taking into account the capacities of organizations outside the United Nations system;

(b) The Department's involvement in the coordination and implementation of issue-specific programmes should be on an exceptional and transitory basis, and at the request of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

C. Resource mobilization

1. Funding for immediate response

40. The General Assembly, in resolution 46/182, recognized the need for a central funding mechanism to ensure the provision of adequate resources for use in the initial phase of emergencies. The central emergency revolving fund set at $50 million was established as a cash-flow mechanism, under the responsibility of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Fund has been useful, particularly when several emergencies occurred simultaneously and agencies had exhausted their emergency funds. In the first five years of the Fund's operations, $124 million were advanced, with the highest amount in 1993 ($48.5 million) and the lowest in 1996 ($4 million). A number of explanations were given for the reduced utilization of the Fund in 1995 and 1996. Fewer large- scale emergencies occurred, and where they took place relief items had been frequently pre-positioned. In addition, in recent years, agencies have developed their own emergency funds and emergency response capacity; the Department has encouraged this trend. However, constraints in the utilization of the Fund also reduced its usefulness and relevance. For example, agencies not certain of donor response to upcoming appeals are hesitant to use the Fund when the need arises since money borrowed from the Fund must be repaid. In comments on an earlier draft, the Department of Administration and Management stated that the ability of the Fund to respond to emergency situations had been substantially hampered by a number of outstanding advances and that it should be noted that as of March 1997, advances made to six agencies, totalling $8.8 million, were past due for the period from 3 to 40 months. The Fund is meant to be used for new emergencies only. Organizations have requested the use of Fund resources to support ongoing emergency programmes in order to avoid serious interruption of them; this was granted only in exceptional circumstances.

2. Consolidated appeals

41. The consolidated appeal aimed at presenting the total range of need in all sectors is one of the main coordination tools under the responsibility of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. As of October 1996, through the consolidated appeal, $13,874 million were required for humanitarian assistance; $10,065 million were contributed, that is 72 per cent of the requirements. Requirements for a number of emergencies are met at 100 per cent; for other emergencies, contributions are consistently around 50 per cent of requirements or below. Responses to appeals vary from sector to sector, usually with the highest shortfalls in the non-food sectors. The need for better advocacy and more sustained contacts with donors during all phases of a crisis was raised in several studies and meetings. However, several Inter-Agency Standing Committee members believe that shortfalls are due to limitations and capacities of donors to fund the various activities; more research on donor trends is necessary.

42. In paragraph 15 of its resolution 48/57, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to strengthen the consolidated appeal process, making it more field-oriented, and to ensure that such appeals were based on specific priorities resulting from comprehensive and realistic projections of

relief requirements. The assessment of needs and strategic planning, two steps of the consolidated appeal process, are critical for the timeliness and credibility of the appeal. Assessments rely on a clear appreciation of the evolving situation in-country; if required, inter-agency field assessment missions are prepared. In 1996, consultations with Member States and donors revealed that one of their main concerns was that not enough attention had been given to developing a plan that would ensure a coherent approach. Inter-Agency Standing Committee members agreed that the in-country coordinator now will be required to coordinate the planning process.

43. In paragraph 31 of the annex to its resolution 46/182, the General Assembly envisaged that, for emergencies requiring a coordinated response, an initial consolidated appeal would be issued within one week. That time-frame is observed in the dissemination of natural disasters situation reports. A few flash appeals have been prepared within the time-frame in response to complex emergencies; however, in most complex emergencies, one to two months may elapse between needs assessments and the issuance of the appeal, with much longer delays in a few cases. Most appeals issued within a month covered emergencies where conditions in the field had already been surveyed, close collaboration already existed with the Governments of the countries affected and the main partners agreed rapidly on basic assumptions. When agreements are delayed, agencies have launched separate appeals in order to respond to the urgent needs of vulnerable groups; however, Governments found that the multiplication of separate appeals undermines the coherence of the international response, and the donor community had difficulties deciding which appeal described a greater need. Reviewing the question, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee considered that the use of interim appeals, issued by individual agencies, could be one of several measures to garner urgently required resources; interim appeals would make specific references to their linkages with the inter-agency in-country strategy, and would normally be based upon indicative figures.

> Recommendation 12, Appeals launched in advance of inter-agency consolidated appeals: For emergencies requiring a coordinated response, agencies should appeal for funds only in the context of the inter-agency consolidated appeal, based on an allocation of responsibilities and a strategic plan agreed upon by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. If separate agency appeals are needed in advance of the consolidated appeal to cover urgent needs of the affected population, such appeals should be launched only with the agreement of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and with clear indication of their purpose and status. The required consultations should not impede agencies in meeting their mandated responsibilities.

3. Monitoring

44. Sometimes shortfalls in contributions are offset by funds from other sources. Donors are increasingly channelling humanitarian assistance through non-governmental organizations; there is a consequent need to improve the tracking of activities outside of the United Nations system. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs prepares an annual analysis of donor assistance to consolidated appeals on the basis of information provided by the organizations involved. It does not have the resources to search actively for and consolidate

information on contributions made, and does not, in any case, track expenditures. Furthermore, according to the joint evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda, experience showed that basic data on staff, finances and activities were difficult or impossible to obtain from a number of non-governmental organizations, and the availability and quality of data collected and made available by donor Governments varied considerably.

45. Donors are seeking increased accountability and a more coherent approach to describing humanitarian needs. In 1996, in the context of the inter-agency follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee decided to explore the possibility of establishing a joint framework for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of programmes that would go beyond individual agencies inputs and look at the overall direction and impact of humanitarian assistance. A minimum of coordination with other initiatives was required, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee expert group on evaluation, and the process of operationalizing the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief. Principle nine of the Code of Conduct on accountability to recipients and to donors recognizes in particular the need to report on activities, from both a financial perspective and the perspective of effectiveness. The needed involvement of all actors in global reporting could be pursued by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs since the General Assembly, in paragraph 35 (f) of the annex to its resolution 46/182, gives the Emergency Relief Coordinator responsibility for serving as a central focal point with Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerning United Nations emergency relief operations.

> Recommendation 13, Global monitoring of emergency assistance: The Department of Humanitarian Affairs should develop its capacity to monitor actively and report on contributions to emergency humanitarian assistance and remaining needs. This monitoring should cover all sources of assistance. To facilitate such monitoring, the Department should pursue the adoption of guidelines and standards, within the framework of the non-governmental organizations Code of Conduct, for agencies outside the United Nations system providing emergency assistance.

D. Advocacy of humanitarian principles and concerns

46. In recent years, the response to most major emergencies also involved activities other than humanitarian assistance. For such complex emergencies, at Headquarters, planning and execution of multifunctional emergency operations was undertaken by several departments, primarily the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. There are no general rules and standard procedures to guide coordination between the military and humanitarian aspects of operations. In 1995, JIU stated that the working relationships between the force commander and the different operators in complex emergency were on an ad hoc basis (JIU/REP/95/6, para. 90). Cooperation and coordination take place through the Department of Humanitarian Affairs or through an appropriate lead agency but

needs to be further strengthened, with full respect for the humanitarian principles under which humanitarian agencies operate.

47. In paragraph 18 of its resolution 48/57, the General Assembly stressed the importance of the Emergency Relief Coordinator participating fully in the overall United Nations planning of responses to emergencies in order to serve as the humanitarian advocate in ensuring that the humanitarian dimension, particularly the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality of relief assistance, was taken fully into account. In 1994, at the initiative of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Departments of Humanitarian Affairs, Political Affairs and Peace-keeping Operations developed a flow chart of actions for the coordination of their respective activities in planning and implementing complex operations in the field. This mechanism, known as the "DHA/DPA/DPKO Framework for Coordination", is meant to assist in coordination within the Secretariat and with other United Nations agencies and programmes. Staff in the three departments have noticed an improvement in the sharing of information and of analysis; Department of Humanitarian Affairs desk officers are very active in the process. The practice of forming interdepartmental ad hoc groups at the desk level, or more formal working groups established for the planning and monitoring of complex operations, is perceived as a step towards coherence in decision-making. However, there is also a perception, on the part of humanitarian partners, that the humanitarian perspective does not get an adequate hearing in inter-departmental fora. Furthermore, a number of agencies feel that there was not sufficient feedback from inter-departmental meetings between the three departments.

48. The staff of the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations commented that the contribution of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to the Secretariat decision-making process was hampered by that Department's obligation to consult with operational agencies. Department of Political Affairs staff, as well as staff of operational agencies, stated that they were keen on maintaining direct contacts to consult, particularly when quick action was required. In its advocacy role, the Department is most successful when it is able to advocate a consensus view of members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, or when its desk officers have direct contacts with the field.

49. In connection with humanitarian aspects of Security Council resolutions, a working group in a symposium organized by ICRC in 1994 noted that there was a general consensus that a humanitarian mandate was - or should be - quite specific. It should be dictated by humanitarian needs alone and must not depend on or be confused with a military or a political mandate. United Nations Security Council resolutions were not always sufficiently clear in that respect. Moreover, confusion could arise in practice owing to the fact that certain humanitarian mandates could be carried out by various bodies depending, in particular, on: the resources or means available; the possibility of access (armed forces having to step in wherever humanitarian agencies were unable to bring in assistance alone or required support). In that context, ICRC noted in a statement at an orientation course on the Security Council organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) on 17 December 1996 that ICRC had been granted observer status by the General Assembly in 1990. In September 1992, the ICRC representative had initiated a practice of monthly

meetings with the serving President of the Security Council, which had taken place since then without interruption. The Emergency Relief Coordinator's access to the Security Council has been limited. The Emergency Relief Coordinator was not designated by the Office of the Secretary-General for a presentation at the Security Council in 1996, although the Emergency Relief Coordinator appeared once before the Council at the request of its President. Early in 1997, the Secretary-General delegated to Department heads responsibility for briefing the Security Council.

Recommendation 14, Advocacy of humanitarian issues and concerns with the policy-making organs of the United Nations:

(a) The Emergency Relief Coordinator should brief the President of Security Council once a month on humanitarian issues. The members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should provide the necessary support to prepare such briefings or to respond promptly to requests by policy-making organs or the Secretary-General. Current access by humanitarian agencies to the Security Council and its President should be maintained;

(b) The Emergency Relief Coordinator should brief members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee without delay on results of consultations within the Framework for Coordination of the Departments of Humanitarian Affairs, Political Affairs and Peace-keeping Operations, and on his meetings with the Secretary-General and with the Security Council and other policy-making organs, as appropriate.

Recommendation 15, Coordination with activities other than humanitarian assistance: Guidelines should be adopted and disseminated to all field missions and headquarters units on coordination between humanitarian organizations, on the one hand, and special representatives or envoys of the Secretary-General, political missions, peacekeeping missions and similar field activities, on the other hand; the guidelines should be applied taking into account the specificity of each situation.

E. Collection, analysis and dissemination of information

50. The Emergency Relief Coordinator is responsible for the systematic pooling and analysis of early-warning information with a view to coordinating and facilitating the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system and to provide consolidated information to all interested Governments and concerned authorities (General Assembly resolution 46/182, annex, para. 35). In the complex emergency environment, as for natural disasters, the resident coordinator and disaster management team members have primary responsibility for alerting the Emergency Relief Coordinator to signs of impending crisis and recommending preventative and preparedness actions.

51. Several difficulties have limited the usefulness of information collected in the field and consolidated at Headquarters by the Emergency Relief Coordinator: lack of understanding in the field by the disaster management teams and the resident coordinator of what they should report; inter-agency reluctance and mistrust about sharing information rapidly, in certain cases. In

addition, not all agencies were equally involved in the disaster management team mechanism. Following the recommendations of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Working Group on Early Warning of New Flows of Refugees and Displaced Persons, inter-agency consultations started in 1993 to share agencies' sectoral assessments, with the aim of possible recommendations for United Nations action. After each consultation, reports on situations requiring attention were issued, but access to the executive level remained a serious concern to the Working Group. The participants worked on a number of methodological issues, including the identification and adoption of common indicators, but did not arrive at a consolidated list of indicators. The Group did not meet in 1996.

52. Since 1993, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been developing the Humanitarian Early Warning System. The System's team focuses on identifying areas of potential crisis and their humanitarian implications. The team compiles and analyses information from various sources. The System is used as a tool to bring to the attention of desk officers and senior staff relevant information and to foster analysis. Agreements have been reached with UNDP and UNICEF to incorporate data and information they collect into early warning analyses. The System's staff - two extrabudgetary posts in 1996 and three in 1997 - prepare analyses considered at the weekly meetings of the oversight group of the Framework for Coordination. However, a number of members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee commented that, to be useful to them, the System should not be limited to country-specific information; there is a need for thematic databases, cutting across sectoral agency domains, on issues such as internally displaced persons, vulnerability analyses, child soldiers. But this goes clearly beyond the resources currently available to the System. Perhaps even more critically, no person or unit within the Secretariat is assigned responsibility for leadership of the overall development of early warning activities. In the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the situation is similar; the inter-agency consultations on early warning did not evolve as a tool for policy-making, linking early warning to contingency planning and preparedness.

Recommendation 16, Enhancing the capacity to provide early warning analyses to the Secretary-General and members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee:

(a) On the basis of a report by the Administrative Committee on Coordination Working Group on Early Warning of New Flows of Refugees and Displaced Persons submitted before the end of 1997, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should agree on a minimum common methodology for gathering, analysing and sharing information pertinent to early signals of humanitarian crises;

(b) Without duplicating specialized early warning systems operated by agencies, inter-agency consultations should, on the basis of consolidated analyses prepared by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, review on a monthly basis short-to-long-term perspectives of situations of concern. Actionable recommendations from the Working Group addressed to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should include, where relevant, prevention or preparedness initiatives.

53. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is developing an international information sharing system, ReliefWeb, defined as a highly interconnected decentralized information network. In 1996, links were established with partners and regional information centres, such as the Department's Integrated Regional Information Network for the Great Lakes, or AzerWeb/Baku. At the beginning of 1997, the system was accessed on average 64,000 times weekly. The system will be fully developed by the end of 1997, if the resources required for its sustainability, $3 million for the biennium 1996-1997, are available. Priorities of the project are to assure 24-hour updating of information, and to develop the scope of the network by information exchange agreements and links with agencies, links to the field and provision of technical assistance where necessary. Within the Department, the Humanitarian Early Warning System, the Integrated Regional Information Network for the Great Lakes and ReliefWeb - although they have different purposes - are conceived as complementary parts of a global system for early warning, operational information and global dissemination. However, the three have not fully recognized the full potential of their interactions.

Recommendation 17, Department of Humanitarian Affairs coordinated programme for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information: By the end of 1997, the Department should formulate a comprehensive strategy maximizing the complementarity of the Humanitarian Early Warning System, the Integrated Regional Information Network for the Great Lakes and ReliefWeb, and present a common funding strategy.

F. Relief and rehabilitation

54. The General Assembly, in paragraphs 35 (h) and 40 of the annex to its resolution 46/182, mandated the Emergency Relief Coordinator to promote actively, in close collaboration with concerned organizations, the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction as relief operations under his aegis are phased out. However, during the years following the adoption of resolution 46/182, no significant progress was accomplished in this area. The gap that existed between the phase of relief covered by humanitarian organizations and long-term, macro-level development remained a problem. In the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, attention was focused on the requirements of unfolding emergencies, and debates on the question of the relief-to-development continuum lacked continuity. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has maintained a role in a number of situations beyond the emergency phase. At the end of a crisis, the Department's exit strategy is currently not linked either to agreed-upon criteria or to a conclusion by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee that the emergency has ended.

55. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, discussions between UNDP and the World Bank, with the participation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, are leading to a more effective interface between humanitarian and development activities. A task force consisting of the World Bank and UNDP is developing cooperative programmes in targeted countries (see DP/1996/18, para. 71). To promote resource mobilization to assist countries in special development situations, UNDP proposed, in 1996, that joint appeals be carried out as part of existing resource mobilization exercises, such as the

Department-led consolidated appeal process, roundtables and consultative groups. UNDP proposed that, where appropriate, that might involve preparation of an expanded version of the consolidated appeal process. The expanded process would be comprised of two parts: part I would focus on emergency relief assistance and a coordinated part II would focus on addressing the longer-term needs for rehabilitation. That approach would meet donor requirements for careful specification of relief aspects and for stronger coordination between the United Nations' relief and development work (DP/1997/CRP.6, para. 38). In 1996, the Department coordinated the review by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the activities of the international community to strengthen local capacity and coping mechanisms. A similar exercise is being conducted by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions regarding the role of the United Nations system in post-conflict recovery. In 1996, the Consultative Committee in follow-up to a survey of the system's capabilities to support post-conflict recovery, decided that proposals be developed for a rational division of labour. The Consultative Committee referred the survey to the Department for consideration in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee review of activities to strengthen relief and development linkages (see ACC/1996/16, paras. 21 and 22). In March 1997 members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee reviewed recommendations that the consolidated appeal process should be expanded to incorporate immediate rehabilitation and recovery requirements as and when required and that development partners should be invited to participate at the outset, and that greater consultations should ensure smooth transition between the consolidated appeal process and the roundtable process.

Recommendation 18, Enhanced coordination with development programmes and agencies:

(a) By the end of 1997, the Emergency Relief Coordinator should propose to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee a set of descriptive criteria to determine the conditions under which the need for a coordinated response to an emergency no longer exists, and where the coordination responsibility of the Emergency Relief Coordinator can accordingly cease;

(b) Department of Humanitarian Affairs-led consolidated appeal process resource mobilization exercises for countries in humanitarian crises should integrate in one strategy relief and rehabilitation programmes, with adequate involvement of a coordinating development programme or agency.

G. Lessons learned and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

56. Within the Policy Analysis Division, the Lessons Learned Unit is responsible for carrying out or coordinating learning from experience studies. Its work is largely dependent on the availability of extrabudgetary funding, and only part of planned activities are implemented. Other units in different divisions are expected to integrate lessons learned into policies and guidelines but emergency related tasks frequently take precedence, and many documents - guidelines or handbooks - have remained in draft form and have not received the dissemination intended. Several evaluation programmes exist among members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, but their collaboration has been limited,

and there is no systematic attempt to monitor and evaluate multi-agency programmes as a whole, nor is there a common understanding and acceptance of the global objectives and strategies of such programmes. Support by the Policy Analysis Division to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee could play a major role in enhancing this collaboration.

57. In 1996, a management study (see para. 62 below) identified the need for improved dissemination of "best practices" within the Department. In the field, personnel of the Department are managing a number of new issues, and skills and methodologies are developed on a case-by-case basis; the lessons learned from these experiences are not communicated in any systematic manner to other field personnel engaged in similar activities. The archival function is weak and documents which constitute the Department's institutional memory often could not be located.

> Recommendation 19, Dissemination of lessons learned and best practices: Drawing on the units contributing to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs lessons learned studies, to the revision or development of policies and guidelines, and to the dissemination of related documentation, the Emergency Relief Coordinator should propose to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee by the end of 1997 a procedure to ensure effective follow-up on lessons learned and best practices. The agreed-on procedure should be implemented in collaboration with the relevant units of members of the Committee.

H. Using methods and practices of disaster relief

58. The 1996 management study of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (see para. 62 below) observed that the Department needed to integrate further the proven natural disaster methods and practices into the complex emergency environment. The Department used a number of tools or mechanisms for all emergencies covered by its mandate; however, natural disasters and complex emergencies do not always have common denominators, and the integration recommended by the management study must be selective. United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams were mobilized a few times for assessments in complex emergencies. Training of the teams organized by the Department now includes segments on complex emergencies. Nevertheless pending further review, it appears that, in complex emergencies, the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination mechanism is useful mostly during the initial emergency response. Regarding training, in addition to United Nations disaster assessment and coordination training, the disaster management training programme was broadened to address issues relevant to complex emergencies. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 calling for comprehensive staff development, it was considered that the programme should keep its focus on national capacity-building; while the complex emergencies training initiative would be developed to facilitate inter-agency collaboration in support of staff development. In 1996, the Department established the field coordination support programme. Placed within the Relief Coordination Branch, the programme gives equal priority to support requirements across the full range of crises, in close consultation with the relevant desks in New York and Geneva. In New York,

within the Complex Emergency Division, the Rapid Response Unit, with similar responsibilities, has been maintained.

> Recommendation 20, Review of the usefulness of disaster relief practices in the complex emergencies environment: By the end of 1997, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should complete a review of the possibilities of further integration of its programmes for natural disasters and complex emergencies. Any integration proposed should preserve the effectiveness of the methods and practices in different types of situations.

IV. OTHER ISSUES

A. Raising awareness

59. In several internal reviews of the public information and external relations programme of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, between 1994 and early 1996, it was noted that, except for the compilation and dissemination of situation reports on natural and environmental disasters, there appeared to be no department-wide procedures or criteria for identifying and communicating information of special importance to the press or other audiences. Rather than anticipating events and determining how they should be handled from a public information standpoint, the Department frequently mounted last-minute efforts.

60. In 1994, the Department presented proposals to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for a strategy to develop an overall system-wide message, as part of a sustained campaign which would include a set of agreed themes and a campaign framework supported by the agencies. The strategy was not adopted, but informal collaboration between external affairs units developed. The Department took several initiatives to advocate issues of global concern. The Department's 1995 strategic plan stated that the Department would develop a strategy for raising awareness of humanitarian principles and policies. In 1996, the External Relations and Information Unit was established in New York to strengthen the Department's links with external partners, to support the Department's information activities and the development of a departmental strategy for humanitarian advocacy; and the Information Management and External Relations Branch, in Geneva, began implementing a new comprehensive publications strategy.

61. Government representatives interviewed by the Central Evaluation Unit commented that they did not have sufficient information on the activities, achievements and difficulties of the Department to be in a position to support actively the work of the Department; a number of representatives were not aware of the Department's priorities. In general, briefings of Member States organized by the Department cover only specific emergencies. However, recent consultations between the Department and the donor community have been broader and more regular. The Department has provided the governing bodies of the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee with reviews of inter-agency work. But government representatives interviewed commented that their work would be greatly facilitated if the Department could also provide regular reviews of the work of the different governing bodies and the implications of their decisions on humanitarian assistance.

Recommendation 21, Department of Humanitarian Affairs strategy for raising awareness:

(a) The Department should propose a strategy for raising awareness of humanitarian principles and policies to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The agreed-on strategy should become a component of the Committee's yearly work plan and should be implemented in collaboration with all Committee members;

(b) Briefings and information provided by the Department to Member States should not be limited to updates on assistance provided in response to specific emergencies but should include information on a wider range of topics, such as the activities of the Department and regular reviews of decisions by intergovernmental bodies and their implications for humanitarian activities.

B. Follow-up to the management study

62. Several partial or overall reviews of the management of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs have been carried out. The latest, a management study of the work plan of the Department and the resource requirements, was completed early in 1996, and its recommendations are the subject of follow-up by the Department. The recommendations covered information dissemination, field support, fund raising and planning. The implementation of the study's recommendations will need to be reviewed in 12 to 18 months.

63. A discussion of the core functions of the Department was initiated in 1995 by Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in relation to proposals to fund a larger proportion of these functions through the regular budget. Following the conclusions of the management study, in 1996, the Department formulated a financial strategy making distinction between core and non-core functions based on long-term activities and short-term, less predictable activities. Out of approximately $80 million overall financial requirements for 1996-1997 to fund headquarters management and programmes, over $64 million are required for core activities, with $19.5 million being covered by the regular budget. The proportion of activities presently identified as core is therefore very high. In case of a shortfall in contributions, not all "core" functions of the Department can be carried out since the reliance of the Department on voluntary contributions will be a permanent feature of its funding. The management study observed that the Department did not need to change radically from the past but was expected to act with a greater focus of its efforts.

Recommendation 22, Follow-up to the management study: Improvements in the management of the Department made as a follow-up to the 1996 management study should be assessed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services by the end of 1998. This assessment should include a review of the issue of core functions and their funding.

Notes

[a] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/49/16), part one, para. 34.

[b] Ibid., Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/47/6/Rev.1), Vol. II, para. 37.6.

[c] Ibid., Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/48/3/Rev.1), chap. III.